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W.C. Handy Music Festival: Four block parties begin on Mobile Plaza

By Bernie Delinski Staff Writer Jul 16, 2025 0

Newly installed shade structures stretch over Mobile Plaza in Florence on Tuesday as part of preparations for the upcoming Handy on the Plaza event to kick off the 44th Annual W.C. Handy Fest. [DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY]

W.C. HANDY MUSIC FESTIVAL EVENTS

The 2025 W.C. Handy Music Festival continues this week, with events happening around the Sho…

FLORENCE — A past staple of the W.C. Handy Music Festival returns for four straight nights beginning Wednesday with the Mobile Plaza block parties.

Chris Stangel, executive director of the Downtown Florence Alliance, said block parties were popular events in the past and organizers wanted to bring back the tradition.

"I do understand that going back about 20 years, there was a time when they closed down Mobile Plaza for Handy events," Stangel said. "This is an outgrowth of a number of businesses coming together and working with the Handy Fest to do a kickoff with a bigger bang this year. It represents us coming together and really trying to localize it for four straight days in the heart of downtown Florence."

Wednesday's event starts at 6 p.m. and coincides with National Hot Dog Day by including "wiener dog" races, a hot dog-eating contest, a dunking booth and prize raffles, as well as music by DJ Pedialyte, Local Brand and Weston Harris Hill. The event lasts until 10 p.m.

Thursday's event is from 5:30 to 10 p.m. and features Ghost River Revival, Lucie Tiger and the North Mississippi Allstars.

Friday's is in two sections with Dr. Warren Ertle and the Corpse Revivers from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and Billy Allen and The Pollies from 9 to 11 p.m.

Saturday's includes Drew Dixon and the Real Thing performing from 5 to 7 p.m. and The Funk Brotherhood from 9 to 11 p.m.

Indoor and outdoor events will take place throughout the Shoals during the 44th annual festival, which runs through June 27.

Stangel said they have had good feedback on the return of the Mobile Plaza concerts.

City and DFA officials began installing shading over the plaza Tuesday for the concerts.

"We will have it available for festivals," Stangel said.

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